GPHY 870: Historical and Cultural Issues in Fieldwork

Course Coordinator: Dr. Laura Jean Cameron  Email: cameron@queensu.ca
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Contact Time: One 3 hour session per week
Format: Lectures, discussions, experiential learning based on key texts, case studies and videos
Class Assessment:
- Students will be responsible for leading discussions based on readings, engaging in weekly activities, keeping a ‘field’ journal and completing four “field exercises”.
- Participation and Presentations............25%
- Field Journal Assignment..................35%
- Field Exercises...........................................40%

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course actively explores the histories, practises and cultural meanings of fieldwork. Geographical fieldwork is considered along with conceptions of the ‘field’ in allied disciplines such as ecology and anthropology. Constructions of the ‘field’ are addressed in terms of empire, nationalism, ‘nature’, pedagogy, translocalism, the lab-field border, performativity and in relation to its role as a gendered, racialized, ethical, imaginative, sensory and affective space of knowledge and activity.

Fieldwork has long had a key role in the making of knowledge in both social and natural sciences. Recent work in geography, sociology and the history of science has begun to explore diverse cultures of the field, raising a range of questions about the nature of field knowledge. Where is the field and for whom? The course focuses on case studies and currents pertinent to the study of field cultures within North America and elsewhere. The primary objective is to provide opportunities for in-depth discussion and activities to help understand and reassess the motives, practises and status of fieldwork. Both ‘human’ and ‘physical’ geography students are most welcome.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Exercise a critical and historical understanding of key concepts related to fieldwork.
- Apply skills in curiosity and generosity to develop our geographical imaginations.
- Explore and challenge the ways that ‘taken for granted’ understandings of the field shape our world from issues of colonialism and climate change to what we regard as ‘music’.
- Integrate and expand our geographical knowledge attuned to how geography may address key environmental challenges facing our world today.
- Connect research and presentation skills, intentions and reflections, and participate actively in the ‘field’ of Kingston and places beyond.

COURSE TOPICS
Potential topics include: Walking; Where is the field?; Senses in Fieldwork; Identity Formation and Fieldwork Practice; Trust in Fieldwork; The Field and the City; Ethics in Fieldwork; Storytelling and the Field; Writing the Field; Sharing our Walks; Gender and the Field; Fieldwork Diaries; Historical Geographies of Participant Observation

SAMPLE OF TYPICAL COURSE READINGS (will change from year to year)
Kimmerer, R., Braiding Sweetgrass, 2014.
Kingsbury and Pile (eds), Psychoanalytic Geographies, 2014.
Kohler & Kuklick, Science in the Field, 1996.